DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 227 953 PS 013 434

AUTHOR Ross, Helen Warren
TITLE Infants in Italy: An Evaluation of Other Than Mother Care.
PUB DATE [81]
NOTE 51p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Day Care Centers; *Delivery Systems; Early Childhood Education; Employer Supported Day Care; *Federal Government; Foreign Countries; Futures (of Society); History; *Infants; *Political Influences; Program Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Italy

ABSTRACT

As more and more women return to the work force while their children are but infants, care other than by the mothers and outside the families' own homes has become an issue of major importance in the United States. In Europe, however, most governments subsidize infant care for mothers working outside the home. One country, Italy, has provided government-sponsored infant care since 1925 and is currently in the process of remodeling the original infant care system. An evaluation of this delivery system was made, based on observations of 90 different infant care programs sponsored by the Italian government, private infant care centers, and one training institution sponsored jointly by the Catholic church and the local government. Observations were made in large northern, central, and southern cities, as well as in several small communities. Over 100 interviews were conducted; respondents included advisors, school administrators, city officials, pediatricians, psychiatrists, program personnel, and parents. Among the results of observations was the overriding finding that basic decisions for infant care are based not on empirical data, but on political considerations. (Author/MP)

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Infants in Italy: An evaluation of Other than Mother Care

Helen Warren Ross, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
San Diego State University

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Abstract

As more and more women return to the work force while their children are but babes, other than mother care for infants outside their own home has become an issue of major import in this country. In Europe, however, most governments subsidize infant care for mothers who work outside the home. This paper reports on one such country, Italy. Italy has provided government sponsored infant care since 1925 and is currently in the process of remodeling the original infant care system. An evaluation of this delivery system was made, based on observations of 90 different infant care programs sponsored by the Italian government, ten private infant care centers and one training institution sponsored jointly by the Catholic Church and local government. These observations were made in large northern industrial cities as well as several small communities, and several large cities in central and southern Italy. Over 100 interviews included advisors, school administrators, city officials, pediatricians, psychiatrists, program personnel and parents. The results of these observations are discussed and the overriding finding, that basic decisions for infant care are based not on empirical data, but on political considerations are discussed in view of the current status of child care in this country.

INFANTS IN ITALY: AN EVALUATION OF OTHER THAN MOTHER CARE

The effect of group care on the infant and his family is one of the major concerns in the area of child management today. This issue will become increasingly more important as more and more mothers of young children enter the work force. According to Zigler, by 1990 only one mother in four in the United States will be a fulltime housewife, and there will be a 50 percent increase in the number of mothers with children under three who will leave their infant in the care of others outside the home. Furthermore the passage of Public Law 94-142 section 504 requires that states must provide an educational program from the cradle to the grave for all persons who are handicapped, thus more personnel with additional skills in infant care will be needed.

> This country is undergoing rapid social-ecological changes. As a result there can be nothing more important than sound studies of infant day care (Zigler, Note 1).

One approach to this question is to observe and evaluate infant day care programs as they exist in other countries. The United States is one of the few modern industrial nations that has no national, government-sponsored form of infant care. Most European countries as well as China and the USSR provide and subsidize care of the infant. Italy has a long tradition of such activity. The original program under the auspices of Mussolini's government provided a centralized system of care run by the Opera Nazionale Maternita e Infanzia (ONMI). This program was established in 1925. In 1971, largely as the result of the influence of many strong women's organizations throughout the country, a

new law was passed to provide additional infant care, the Asili Nido* (Reppetto, Note 2). Thus until January 1981 the national government did, in fact, support two very different systems of infant care. One of the basic differences between the two systems is the political and philosophical positions concerning the primary purpose of child care.

One must understand certain aspects of Italian life and people in order to evaluate, if only superficially, a topic which is so embedded in the fabric of everyday life as is infant care. Italy, a country of contradictions, is a complex combination of Catholicism and Marxism. The major subcultures reflect the Socialist Marxist tradition on the one hand and the Christian Catholic tradition on the other (Acquaviva & Santuccio, 1976).

It is a forward-looking country but with an anachronistic relationship with the Catholic Church as the result of the alliance between it and the fascist government (Jucker, 1970, Earle, 1976). There is an admixture of politics which is a challenge to traditional wisdom; communism was born and nurtured in the settled and wealthy North. However, this political philosophy, whose claim is the representation of the poor and the oppressed, is still not accepted nor trusted in the poverty stricken South. The Communist Party in Italy is the most ideological and well disciplined of modern parties yet with little effective representation in Sicily and the Italian South (Torrow reported in Schneider & Schneider, 1976, Serfaly & Grey, 1980). Italy is a country of enigmas; as a nation considered a major Catholic country but the birthplace of one of the oldest Protestant sects in Europe (Mangioni, 1976).

As a unified country Italy is younger than the U.S. and in area, smaller than California. The republic of today was united in 1861 under the Savoy

*"Nido" means "nest," "Asilo," asylum (safe place).

Kingdom of Sardinia and the capital was located in Turin; French was the official second language. When the bureaucracy was transferred to Rome it increased enormously, became less efficient and changed the entire character of Italian government (Acquaviva & Santuccio, 1976). The constitution which governs the current republic was signed in 1948 and at that time the current regions were also established. This constitution provides for a government which consists of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The deputies are elected every five years by universal direct suffrage in a proportion of one deputy for every 80,000 inhabitants. There is a senator for every 200,000 members of the population. The president is elected by this Chamber/Senate and serves for seven years. The president may dissolve the parliament except during his last six months of office. The Italian President is not a figurehead nor is he apolitical; however the more important leader in the government is the President of the Council of Ministers (roughly analogous to the Prime Ministers of Britain and France). He is the person who manages to gather enough votes from all quarters to elect and keep himself in office and he has no tenure. In Italy this is no mean feat since there are more than 12 political parties. The most powerful are the Christian Democrats (DC), the Communist Party (PC), and the Socialists (PSI) (Earle, 1975).

During the fascist regime the central government was dominant and local government was dictated by Rome. After the establishment of the regions under the 1948 constitution, regions were governed by their own local governmental structure. However, the central government remained dominant until the decentralization movement which began in the early 70s. The Ministry of Education for example, responsible for education from elementary school through the University is still extremely powerful (Acquaviva & Santuccio, 1976).

Unlike a number of the other ministries which have yielded control to local government, the Ministry of Education is firmly entrenched in the central government. There is concern among the personnel in infant care that the administration of these programs may become engulfed in internacine warfare and be vulnerable to a take-over by this monolithic system.

The Italy of today is composed of 20 regions which are further divided into provinces and communes. The larger cities are further subdivided into circoscriziones or quartiere. The population of the regions ranges from 111,029 in Valle D'Aosta to 4,984,677 in Campania. This is out of a total population of 56,828,511. The country has an area of 116,280 square miles while California in contrast, has an area of 158,693 square miles (Istituto Centrale di Statistica, 1980).

For convenience the Republic is divided into three major sections: 1) North, 2) Central and 3) South. However, the real distinction politically and culturally is between the North and Central regions and the Mezzogiorno or the South. The Mezzogiorno begins with Campania and Puglia, roughly below a line from Naples to the spur. Throughout Italy there are regional rivalries and different loyalties but the major conflict exists between the Mezzogiorno and the rest of Italy. This separation is nowhere more apparent than in provisions made for infant care.

In Italy the typical work week for the government employee is 36 hours. However, some laborers, particularly in the South work ten-hour days plus a half day Saturday. The hours of infant care provided range from 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. where care is provided for working parents, to 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in areas where both parents do not work. The hours spent in government-provided care vary greatly. In Reggio nell'Emilia where only 15 percent of mothers work outside the home, the infant is typically picked up between 1 p.m.

and 3 p.m. In Turin in the Nido which is operated by Fiat for their employees the workers finish work at 3 p.m. but often do not pick up their children until 5:30 or 6:00. Government offices throughout Italy close at 1 p.m. and do not open again, but they are open on Saturdays. Rome has over 30 percent of its work force in government offices, therefore these infant care centers provide care six days a week which is true in other areas as well. Most of the Asili Nido (infant care centers) are closed during August since all businesses and manufacturers close except for resort areas.

The child care systems covered in this report are of the cities of Turin, Naples, Rome, and Palermo as well as several smaller cities and suburban areas. The emphasis is on infant care, the Asili Nido ages 0-3 years; however, some time was spent with the administration and observation of the Scuole Materne which provides care for the infants from 3-5 years or until they enter the regular school system which is controlled by the Ministry of Education.

The material was obtained by spending many hours in a few programs and a few hours in many programs. Eighty different Asili Nido and ten Scuole Materne were visited. Interviews were held with over 100 persons from advisors, puericultrici and social workers to psychiatrists, parents and pediatricians.

The influence of distinct and separate systems for the care of infants is still apparent and each area contributes its own specific quality to the administration of the Nido as well as to the philosophy behind the Nido and care of infants. The northern cities, Turin and Milan, for example, reflect the efficient industrial city and a pragmatic concern for "socialization"; the smaller towns in Emilia Romagna, the birthplace of the communist party and jokingly referred to as "Red Emilia," reflect strongly the values of an idealistic Marxism (Jucker, 1970, Earle, 1975). The nature of infant care in Rome is complicated not only by the struggle between the old (ONMI)

administration and the new nido, but by the fact that this city has provided that each circoscrizione (15) shall be autonomous within the city in terms of the development of the Nido and administration. Therefore some neighborhoods are without these services and some have both XONMI and nido. Nowhere is the situation more obscure than in Naples. The government and the politics of this city are much too complex and intricate for any outsider to pretend to understand the machinations which govern it. Only in Naples, the poorest city in Italy, does one see an overabundance of caregivers and hear the complaint that there was too much help for too few infants. The continuum from Naples to Sicily is one of degree. The Sicilian is still reluctant to trust government of any type. It is a poor area and waves of emigration have left it drained of the resource of its young men. The government does not appear to the outsider as chaotic as Naples, but it is obvious that in Palermo there is no strong support of the Law which provides for building and administration of the Nido. In 1980 since the law passed in 1971 for the construction of the nido, not one new nido has opened in Palermo.

HISTORY OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED INFANT CARE

In 1925 under the auspices of Benito Mussolini the Operazione Nazionale Maternita e Infanzia (ONMI) was established. This office remained in existence until January 1, 1981. A central office was responsible for all infant care until the first Asilo Nido was opened in Reggio nell'Emilia. Under the ONMI administration, buildings to house infants were constructed throughout Italy. As one views these structures throughout Italy, despite cultural and climatic differences, one is struck by the sameness. It is impossible to believe that the architect of such edifices had ever seen a child much less understood anything about the principles of growth and development. These buildings look more like hospitals than like warm, cheery nurseries for young infants. The

ONMI building is typically three stories; they are massive, imposing, barren, bleak and sterile, inside and out. The rooms are large with tiled floor and walls, high ceilings, windows above eye level and long corridors. The net result is an extraordinarily high noise level as sounds ricochet against the tiled floors and walls. There are no outside play spaces except for a railed porch on the third floor. There younger babies are "sunned" and older children run about and kick a few balls. The infants are housed on the third floor and other floors often are used for other social services. Each age group is kept in a large room. These rooms are connected by large long halls; numerous bathrooms are built infant size, practically the only indication that the buildings were designed for children. Originally the ONMI was charged with sanitation and proper diet for the young; therefore one entire section of the building is devoted to laundry, pantry, and kitchen complex. An obvious concern of ONMI personnel was possible contagion from the outside. This "inside-outside" concept is reinforced by the complete bathing and redressing (including diapers) of the infant when he comes from home. Just prior to going home the infant is redressed in his "outside" or own clothes. Naturally all personnel wear white uniforms which are worn only in the building. The large laundry component of the ONMI is necessitated by the constant changing of clothes. Needless to say, no outside visitors are allowed in the ONMI, not even relatives who wait at the door to have their infant "delivered" to them (Stefano, Note 3; Dinelli, Dore & Pensato, 1979).

The ONMI were built in the poor sections of the city. The intention of this social service was to provide care for infants whose parents were thought to be unfit to properly care for their infants. Since, at that time, the infant death rate in Italy was one of the highest of all industrialized

nations, the delivery of care emphasized nutrition and sanitation. Mussolini was said to have claimed that the institution of the ONMI would improve the Italian stock (Stefano, Note 3). The ONMI had a contractual arrangement with the Catholic Church to train the ONMI personnel, the "Puericultrici." The training of these young girls was standard. There was, of course, a heavy religious education and the basic tenet of infant care was to keep the child clean, sanitary, well fed and obedient. The didactic material covered physiology, anatomy, diet and sanitary procedures as well as obedience training. There is absolutely no mention of the emotional or social aspects of the infant's life. The major thrust of this training program is to provide information about the proper Italian diet as well as how to keep the baby and the environment sanitary and safe. One ONMI director said facetiously, "Italian Puericultrici think infants are potted plants; they are sunned, watered, and fed with great regularity (Zizzo, Note 4).

In 1969 only 1.58 percent of babies under the age of four went to Children's nursery, the highest proportion was 2.61 percent in Emilia Romagna in the North and only 0.70 percent in Calabria in the South (Schneider & Schneider, 1976). In practice, a social provision as important as that of nursery schools hardly existed. The underutilization of the ONMI may have been the result of the repressive rearing techniques and the custodial nature of care. Several sources refer to the ONMI and specifically infant care in general as "parking lots" for babies (Benigni, 1979).

During the latter half of the 1960s the Unione le Donne Italiane (UDI), a liberal, progressive organization with a strong Marxist orientation made known their concern about the inadequate provisions for infant care. In 1971 this group was largely responsible for the passage of the Law #1044. This law provided money for the development of the Asili-Nido (AN) throughout Italy

(Note 5). It was also this law that mandated the closure of the ONMI administration. This law stiuplates that the ONMI is to be phased out and entirely replaced by Asili-Nido in January 1981 (Note 5).

One function of the AN was to decentralize the administration of the care of young infants and children and to provide local control for the development of each nido. Therefore throughout Italy there is great variation in the number of nidi and the quality of the program. The most elaborate and extensive programs are found in Emilia Romagna, and the most desolate and impoverished are located in the South and Sicily.

CURRENT INFANT CARE

Government Sponsored

Emilia Romagna's infant care provides an example of the most comprehensive and progressive system in Italy. This region has not had to cope with the rapid social changes imposed by the increased need in the work force that is to be found in the more heavily industrial regions of Piedmont and Lombard. Thus the architecture and the administration of the nido in Emilia Romagna is essentially homogeneous and the nidi in Reggio nell'Emilia are outstanding examples of this tradition.

The structure of the nido in the Commune of Reggio nell'Emilia in Romagna, is particularly instructive. The nido as it developed in Reggio nell'Emilia became the model for many infant care programs in Italy and was the program which was used to develop the guidelines written into the National Law #1044.

Reggio is a town of 130,031. It is the birthplace of the Italian flag as well as the Italian communist party. A charming town, it is supported largely by cottage industry, although it boasts one of the largest meat packing houses in Italy. It is a lovely, quiet town and in the center most persons travel by bicycle. I was informed by one of the "psicopedagogistas" (roughly equivalent

to a school psychologist) that in Reggio there is no real wealth and no real poverty. Land and money appear to be evenly distributed. Few women work and those who do, work inside their own home.

Reggio started its infant care program, the Asili Nido, before the national law provided for this type of care for infants throughout the country. In 1971 the provincia and the commune (county and city) developed a policy which radically changed the then current ONMI structure and passed a special tax for the purpose of building new infant centers. The ONMI buildings were closed or redesigned. The new centerr were to provide a basis for psychological growth and development as opposed to the medical-sanitary model which had existed previously. The administration of these centers was provided by a new office, the Scuole Comunali Dell' Infanzia Asili Nido. In 1979 there were 11 AN and 49 Scuole Materne. Reggio has three administrations for the Asili Nido and Scuole Materne; state, parochial, and commune. Of these 49, 7 are state, 19 are religious or parochial and 3 are private. The remaining 20 are supported and administered by the commune. Each of these centers which is under the auspices of the Scuole Communali has an advisory group (Commune di Reggio nell'Emilia, Note 6). The administration of the Scuole Dell' Infanzie e Asili Nido reflects strongly the basic philosophical tenets of the political community. This section of Italy has the longest history as a representative of the Socialist Marxist subculture. In Reggio nell'Emilia the Italian version of a Marxist-Socialist philosophy permeates every aspect of the administration of the commune's scuole and nido.

First, the authority for policies and decisions is vested in the people that the nido and scuole serve. That is the function of the elections of the advisory board who are persons from the quartiere, parents as well as workers in the nido. The central administration is set up to serve only as consultant

to these local groups. In the administration there is one director and there are five psicopedagogista who serve approximately six centers each. Their function is to assure that all goes well in the Nido and thus they make certain that supplies are current and make referrals to doctors or social workers. If a behavior problem exists in the nido they make home visits and answer questions about behavior or provide demonstration of special educational techniques when asked. The psicopedagogista plan workshops for the nido personnel and are generally available for trouble shooting. Many of the psicopedagogista have been insegnanti (teachers) in the Nido before they go on to the university. The psicopedagogista is a university-trained person with a degree in education or psychology.

Teachers (insegnanti) have no special training but they are expected to spend three hours each week of their 36 hour total on in-service training or home visits. The teachers for the older children (scuola materna) do have education past the eighth grade. The philosophical position that all work is of equal merit, is stressed in the internal organization as well. There is no chain of command and the personnel all have equal responsibility. The cook, the cleaning staff as well as the caregivers share equally in decision making and are equally responsible for the smooth operation of the nido. In order to facilitate the progressive child-rearing techniques which are more permissive than the traditional Italian code, the nido looked for personnel who were not trained in the traditional schools for puericulturi in order that the personnel could be indoctrinated into more "modern" methods. Training programs for nido personnel are of recent origin and as yet there are few graduates.

In Reggio the majority of the nido are in new buildings. In contrast to the ONMI buildings these are single floor structures and they typically house 68 infants from three months to three years. One of the smaller and more

intimate centers has only 42 infants. Volumes have been written on the appropriate architecture for the AN but the typical structure in Reggio has four "home rooms," large play area for the older children and a smaller, more intimate area for younger children. The babies are divided into four groups: Lattanti, 3-12 months of age; Piccoli, 12-18 months; Medi, 18-24 months; and Grandi, 24-36 months.

Arcobaleno is a typical building. In Arcobaleno there are five adults for 25 babies (3 months to 18 months) and six adults for the 23 medi and 19 grandi. In this particular center there are thus 67 children including two handicapped infants; there are an additional five ausiliarie (cleaning staff) and a cook. At noon there is a double staff since there are two shifts. Therefore, at the critical period of feeding and napping the ratio is doubled.

The building is approximately square with an atrium in the center. Typical of all or almost all Italian infant schools there is no outside playground. There is an entry way and a hall as one enters, with the kitchen, (which is open for infants to explore) on the right. The organization of the entry way in the nido is particularly instructive since this is a distinctive feature of the nido and is elaborated in the buildings in this region. This foyer includes pictures of the infants, their teachers and the ausiliarie as well as the psicopedagogist. Frequently the parents pictures are included with their children. The week's menu is posted as well as the daily activities. Often the signs set the tone for the nido. One entry boasts the sign

Two and two are four
Four and four are eight
But here the magic bird
crosses the rainbow*

*The quotes have been translated from the original Italian by the author. The original Italian is usually more eloquent.

At the end of the hall is a large "L" shaped room used for dining and free play. Two smaller rooms house the older children for sleep and learning activities. On the left as one enters is the "crib room," the lattanti play room, a large bath area for diapering and bathing and a room for the piccoli. The youngest infants are fed on demand in their play area. The piccoli have their own corner and the two older groups eat together at small tables. The unit is self-contained with washer-dryer, rooms for the workers to change and rest and an Atelier (work room) and dining area for the staff. There are large windows from the ceiling to the ground and the building is light and airy. It is painted in bright colors with tile floors and there are many lively pictures on the wall. The toys for the youngest infants are wooden finger toys, mobiles and many ingenious climbing structures for the infants to pull to stand and cruise, and drawers which can be opened and emptied with ease. For the older children in the free play area there are slides, tricycles and balls. With the older group, they also have props for dramatic play and a lot of small manipulative material. These buildings are constructed to enhance the infants' social and psychological growth but still incorporate the large play areas with tiled floors which amplify the sound of the normally noisy two and threes.

The progressive methods of child care are based on many of the principles which have long been incorporated in many nursery schools in the U.S. and Britain. The environment for the infant is to provide for his psychological as well as his physical well being. Thus the infant is supported in his quest for autonomy and independence which provide the well-springs of self-esteem and self-confidence. The infant is to learn early to be a member of the group, but this is not to be at the expense of his loyalty to his family. In one nido there is a sign posted which says:

We live in two worlds,
One is the nido, where we learn to live with others
The other is our home, where we learn love and loyalty.

Even in Reggio one can observe the subtle conflict between traditional values and progressive childrearing methods. The infant in every nido or ONMI is served basically the traditional Italian meal. This means soup or pasta, meat course and dessert all without milk. In the traditional nursery the child is fed until he consumes the required amount which is meticulously measured in grams as the "sacred" amount for the health and well-being of the infant. In Reggio the food portion is still meticulously measured and it reflects the Italian menu. However, in order to promote autonomy, the infant is encouraged to feed himself. Consequently, when soup is served it often ends up on top of the head or smeared on the table; the pasta ends up on the face, in the hair and on the floor. The caregivers appear to be mildly amused by this and take it in their stride, but the visiting parent may be horrified. Needless to say, the piccoli are routinely bathed after lunch before the nap. The meal has not changed to smaller portions of finger food because nutrition is still the province of the medical profession and in Italy, as in the U.S., even in "Red Emilia," the medical doctor tends to remain the more tradition-bound member of society.

The people of the city all support these centers. They do not provide "baby sitting" nor are they considered "parking lots," but they serve as important educational functions. The experience for the young child is valued and for most mothers in Reggio, this is an experience of choice not of dire need. Togetherness, in an endeavor in which all participate equally, is the major goal of the nido in Reggio.

Modena, another city in Emilia Romagna, lies midway between Bologna and Reggio nell'Emilia. Modena has a population of 180,557 and is much more densely populated than Reggio (Istituto Centrale di Statistica, 1980). It is the second richest community in Northern Italy. Modena's infant care does not

differ greatly from Reggio but its facilities are not sufficient for the great demand. Modena also has not established a separate office to administer the nido and the administration is divided between several departments in the city. Perhaps as a result of this different administrative structure, a more complex internal structure has evolved within the nido or it may be a holdover from the ONMI structure. The separate AN have a "coordinator" who serves as the person responsible for the operation of each nido. (A local committee is also elected and charged with the operation of each nido.)

In order to cope with the lengthy waiting list for entrance into the nido, the administration has developed an elaborate system with weighted scores given to each category considered to represent a legitimate need for the service.

Priorities are given for single mothers, handicapped infants as well as infants from low income families. Lesser priority is given to families with working parents who have relatives who can care for infants and least priority of course, to the two-parent family with only one member in the work force. Therefore, these programs meet "dire" need and cannot afford the luxury of providing a socialization experience for all.

Currently there is a great deal of debate in Italy concerning the merits of the nido. This becomes more apparent in Modena than elsewhere. The personnel responsible for the administration of the Asili nido in Modena are among the most acute in Italy. They are truly critical of many practices within the nido which many Italians do not mention. These practices could be considered stressful for the infant and/or his family.

The buildings are similar to Arcobaleno described earlier. They are single story structures with attractive and elaborate environmental design which has been constructed to enhance the infant's developing psychomotor skills.

The large play areas which are found in all Asili throughout Italy have high ceilings and tiled floors and the noise level is pandemonium. Despite the pleasant design, the nido in Modena are no exception. They are, however, colorful single story buildings with imaginative built-in toys. One coordinator, captious of the nido architecture, stated that the architects had obviously not lived with children. She mentioned the noise level as a major concern and stated that she was convinced that this led not only to psychological problems for the caregivers, but to physical health problems as well. In fact, she went so far as to suggest that there was a high rate of spontaneous abortion among the child care worker and this could be the direct result of the inordinately high levels of noise in the nido. (For the most part, Italians never mention noise as aversive.) She continued to say that the Nido is painted with too many colors for the young child and the large, noisy atrium in combination with so many bright colors leads to random activity and aggressive play (Director, Asili Nido, Note 7).

Modena nido administration, typical of the nido in this Romagna region, places great emphasis on the psychological well-being of the child and the cognitive aspects of growth. The administration publishes bulletins regularly with menus as well as suggested lesson plans to be used in the nido. They have material for parents on separation, anxiety, and methods for introducing the infant in the nido. The communes of Reggio nell'Emilia and Modena allot time to be spent with families by teachers and consultants to discuss the consequences of separation for both the baby and the family; the positive aspects of the socialization are presented also. In addition, written material has been developed which covers these topics and they are made available to parents and teachers. Intricate planning allows the baby to join the nido to minimize the stress for the baby and family. In Reggio nell'Emilia, for

example, when it is at all feasible, one of the original caregivers of the infant group will remain with this group until they leave the nido. Therefore the infant has one stable caregiver throughout his stay. Since the ratio of adult to infant changes rapidly as the child grows older this graduation of the caregiver is staggered. One is impressed with the quality of infant care afforded the family in this region.

To the northwest, Piedmont is situated next to the Italian-French border. Turin, which is located in the region, is the fourth largest city in Italy. The Fiat automotive industry and the Olivetti business machine are located here. This large industrial city, proximate to the French border is distinctively French. The influence is subtle but unmistakable. Recently the migration from Southern Italy has been so extensive that much of the character of the city is changing. In the year 1977 there were 125,735 migrants from the south to the Piedmont region (Istituto Centrale di Statistica, 1980). Most of those went to work in the factories of Turin. These families come from a different culture, have different living and eating patterns and speak a different language. Southern habits and cooking permeate the city and many youngsters in the nido speak a tongue which is foreign to their teachers. The migration has placed a heavy demand on nido facilities. These nido personnel see the role of the Nido as a major socializing agent. The thrust of these is to facilitate program adjustment of the young children and their families to Turin and the Piedmont; to integrate them into the society.

Two nido administrations are housed within the city. Turin also boasts of major industry-sponsored infant care centers, Fiat and Olivetti. One governmental office administers the AN in the Province of Turin and another administers the program in the city. These two administrations reflect different philosophies regarding infant care. The administration in the city

of Turin is headed by a Christian Democrat and the Office of the Provincia is run by a member of the PC (Communist Party). The city runs a centralized, structured program. In contrast to the nido in Emilia Romagna which house 60 infants in the large buildings and 40 in the smaller buildings, these new buildings in the city of Turin are constructed to house 120 infants. They are imposing buildings and the infant rooms are on the third floor. Despite the fact that much time and money has been invested into the new nido buildings in Piedmont, the structures within the city of Turin are overwhelming and have many of the drawbacks of the ONMI architecture.

Throughout the region of Piedmont the size of the nido ranges from 30 to 120 infants. The major age classification in these nido is the Lattanti (0-18 months) and the Divezzi (18-36 months). The structures are built to accommodate only two age classifications, therefore even these new buildings have only two major "home rooms." Despite this, in many of the larger Nido there may be as many as 22 separate rooms for specific purposes. These new buildings also provide ramps and other features to accommodate the handicapped infant and in one center there is a therapeutic swimming pool. One exception to this general rule is Via Guiglio in Turin, a combined nido and scuola materna. This facility is housed in an old insane asylum which is being reconstructed by the city. This building which is several hundred years old has enormous rooms and halls. The nido and scuola materna only partially occupy the building which is still being reconstructed for other social programs. It is located within a large walled garden and is quietly secluded from the hustle of the city. The building has great charm. The neighborhood served by this nido is one of small merchants and school teachers; many southern immigrants. The construction has been built within the building with the use of platforms and stairs which the young children can manage easily.

There is a dining area both indoors and outdoors and the children have easy access to the garden. This is one of the few children's play spaces outside, with a garden which the children tend themselves. The feeling of the connection between inside and outside, and great openness within the large room with the use of platforms gives a sense of freedom.

The smallest infants are located on the top platform and the younger children play and work on the ground floor. There is one large common space which is shared with the nido and the scuola materna. The major shortcoming to the arrangement is the noise from the youngsters on the first floor that carries to the ceiling where the younger children sleep. Reminiscent of ONMI practices, these children were dressed in the nido uniform which they wore while in the nido and the personnel wore smocks. This practice is common in most nido except in Emilia Romagna and a few nido in Rome.

A visit to the nido in the Turin province provided a much different picture of infant care. The nido of the Province are a direct contrast to these large structures found in Turin. These are new, small, one-story structures which provide an intimate atmosphere. There is carpeting on the floor for the smallest infants and the caregivers enjoy floor space together. These are nido which are quiet and intimate, which at most house 40 infants. One of the outstanding features of the Provincia nido, is the quality and originality of the toys. An artist, Santorini, offers a course which provides instruction in the design and construction of infant toys. Several parents in this area availed themselves of the instruction and designed and made the furniture and toys which are found in this nido. This furniture provides infants with attractive and ingenious climbing structures, hidey holes and a vast variety of puzzles on both a large and small scale. But even in the quiet province, removed from the din of the city, one does not see use of the outside

for infant play. However, perhaps because of the time of year, this was the first Nido where infants did not have layers of clothes plus high top shoes and stockings; in fact, several infants were barefoot. Since the parents do dress babies like dolls, this nido provides appropriate play clothes, not uniforms, if the parents wish. Most parents select the nido play clothes but one is not struck by the uniform appearance. As was the case of the Nido in Romagna, the Province of Turin is concerned with reducing the stress of separation for the new infant. In this province the new baby attends only half day for one month and the parents remain with the baby for his first ten days. In Beinasco no children under six months are accepted.

In Rome to the south, in the region of Lazio, one can see the extremes in child care provisions. There is a model program, Pinturicchio, in a middle class neighborhood where one can observe healthy, happy infants in a tasteful quiet atmosphere with young caregivers and visiting students. In another neighborhood which is ridden with drugs, prostitution and unemployment, the care varies from custodial to special innovative planning which includes "Foster grandparents." The transitional nature of many of the programs in Rome can be seen by visiting an XONMI* during the course of a few months. One such program originally was reminiscent of "Snake Pit" with youngsters lying on the floor crying, while the caregivers stood and looked blankly at each other. The social worker responsible for the facilitation from ONMI to Nido was appalled by these conditions. In a few short months there were toys available, pictures on the walls and the caregivers were reading to children and leading them in group games.

* The designation "X" ONMI indicates an infant program housed in original ONMI building which is in the process of being integrated into the Nido administration.

The regional law which provides for AN in Rome was not passed until 1975. In 1979 this region, Lazio, which has almost twice the number of infants from 0-3 years as does Emilia Romagna, has approximately one-half the number of Nido and the equivalent number of XONMI. Rome, therefore, under either administration has not provided the quantity of child care as have other regions in the North.

Naples which is 120 miles south of Rome is in the region of Campania. This is the true Mezzogiorno or the south. Naples reflects the differences betweeen the north and the south. This city and province, the third largest in Italy, with the largest number of children between 0-3 years (Istituto Centrale di Statistica, 1980) had only one nido, and it was not constructed until 1979. In spring 1980 the Nido was opened but was lacking toys, equipment and did not have the full complement of children. Bagnoli, this new and only nido is on the outskirts of Naples in a poor district. It is a huge barren building of a reddish brown. The rooms are immense and the ceilings are high. Because they have no new equipment the steel cribs and playpens from the ONMI are still used. The building with oversized rooms, high ceilings and muddy color is not inviting. The advantage over the old ONMI building may be that the floors are linoleum and the building is single story. There are plans for a playground to be included.

In Naples proper, right off the Corso Umberto, a major thoroughfare, there is an XONMI. This building is the typical ONMI structure with the infants upstairs. The children were observed during lunch time. In the ONMI the division is typically Lattanti, 0-18 months and Divezzi 18-36 months. The older infants ate in a large dining/play room. There were two caregivers per table of six and each baby was carefully spooned his meal. The younger infants were fed in their crib room and they were held while being fed. This meant

some had to wait while others were fed. These younger children get no milk either by cup or bottle at this noon meal.* In this XONMI there were both ONMI and nido personnel. The Director was ambivalent about the new system. She felt that one supervisory personnel would insist that matters be handled in one way and then another would come and tell her it had to be done differently. She stated quite clearly that no matter what she did it was considered wrong by someone.

The ONMI personnel have a strong background in health and sanitary methods and in Naples the office of sanitation supervises the ONMI. The nido personnel are supervised by the office of social service. In the opinion of Ms. Porru, the Director, the social workers are limited in their knowledge of health and sanitation and the social workers "suggest the babies be allowed to play in the toilet bowls if they wish" (Porru, Note 8). This XONMI was a distillate of a caregiving style which was noted throughout Naples. These babies tend to be "shown off." In this XONMI it was particularly painful to have babies paraded like trained seals to do tricks for the visitors. These workers, and Neapolitans in general, express a proprietory attitude toward these babies and the constant questions were really a statement. . . "Are not the babies in Naples better cared for?. . .prettier. . .healthier than those in Rome, Milan or up north?"

Nowhere was the dissension between the old and the new more apparent than in Naples. In every interview or observation a pejorative comment was made concerning the procedures of the "other side," Onmi or Nido. In Naples the city with the largest infant population, the infant care facilities which do

* This is true throughout Italy; milk is considered inappropriate with meals. Relatively recent use of good refrigeration (Post WWII) made milk a dangerous food. Traditionally given at morning and sometimes in evening--this hold-over from past also because animals were milked morning and evening.

exist are underutilized. Only one-third of the women work and those who have babies and work prefer to leave the infant with a member of their "own" family. Some families use the service just when they have no place else to turn or if the baby needs to be fed.

As we turn to what we may refer to as the youngest of the new order, Palermo's infant care will be detailed. Palermo is in Sicily which was one of the five regional governments to obtain a special form of local autonomy. (Emilia-Romagna has sought this special statute in the past but it has not been granted.) Sicily is a triangular island of 9,926 square miles. Palermo, the capital, has 687,587 inhabitants but its population density is slightly less than Turin's and one-half the density of Naples (Istituto Centrale di Statistica, 1980).

In Palermo four infant care programs which permitted an observer were sponsored by the government and three were privately run nido. All the infant programs which were sponsored by the government were housed in the ONMI buildings and they are run much as the ONMI of the past. Despite the fact that arrangements for visitation were made by the leading judge for the children's court in the city of Palermo the visits (with one exception) were strained—and it was apparent that visitors were a novel experience. One did not become part of the woodwork and children and caregivers alike stopped to stare as the observer made her entrance. These old buildings (one of the newest was 23 years old) serve not only as infant centers but they also have family planning, skin clinics and pediatric clinics. The rooms are large, walls are tiled and the windows are too high for the youngsters to see the outside. There are no playgrounds but an airing porch is apparent. There are no pictures on the walls except for the Madonna or the crucifix. These nido (XONMI) were in the poorer section of the city and were rather bleak and grim.

The workers in these large structures are generally older and many have been employees since before the change from the ONMI to the nido legislations. Therefore, they were all trained under the medical-sanitary model. They take great pains to point out the cleanliness of the facility, and the storeroom, kitchen and laundry are considered as important if not more important than the play room. (I was struck by how much time would be spent showing the fine pasta, tomatoes and parmagiano cheese kept for the babies, only the best food.) The laundry is an integral part of the operation since babies are stripped of their clothes and completely redressed: diapers, underclothes and all in the uniform to be worn in the nido. The babies are bathed, dressed and diapered with great efficiency. The menu does not distinguish this center from any other visited in Italy but these infants are fed and there is no playing with the food. They are usually spoon-fed by the caregivers.

The structure of the centers not only differs in building but in the line of authority. The Direttrice is in charge of all personnel in the Nido and she is responsible for everything from maintenance to food purchase (menus are provided) and supervision of the staff. The primary purpose of these centers one feels, is to keep the baby safe, healthy and clean. Many professionals throughout Italy deplore these "parking lots" for babies. However, one pedagogist from Reggio defended this style of infant care. She said that "one must realize when the ONMI was first developed, the infant death rate throughout Italy was extraordinarily high and thus keeping the infant alive, well and healthy was a legitimate concern and a major accomplishment" (Filippini, Note 9). The most recent date (1978) on infant death per 1,000 live births (less than one year) is 14.7 in Reggio, 17.2 in Palermo (Istituto Centrale di Statistica, 1980), and this may in part, explain why the medical-sanitary model exists with such resistance to the new approach to infant care.

The most pleasant nido was Villaggio Ruffini on the outskirts of town. This XONMI was built 23 years ago and the director has been with this center since it opened. She is an ex-nun and missionary with training in social work. A lengthy observation was made in her office as the babies were picked up to go home. Despite preparation for the imminent closing for summer, these babies had a bright colorful environment with many plants and cheerful pictures. The caregivers were seen playing with the babies and each baby had a bag of special toys he brought with him from his home. It was impressive to view how devoted this woman was to the children and their families. One young mother stated that she had moved to this area so that her baby could go to the Villaggio and that everyone in Palermo knew it was the best for babies. As I watched each family come to the office for their baby (note they still do not enter the infant's environment) they were given the child's merenda (afternoon snack) and they talked with the "Direttrice." Since this was the last day of school, they were saying goodbyes for the summer. One baby was picked up by his brother and sister, the oldest child could not have been more than seven. Several babies were picked up by siblings around 11-15 and numerous parents came. It was impressive to note the number of older children who came with parents to visit the Director who had been "their teacher" too. Here the Director explained who the observer was and what she was doing. The parent spoke freely with me and it did not make one feel like a creature from outer space.

It must be taken into account that the nido in Palermo were visited in mid-July. The centers were all preparing to close for the month of August and descriptions of the programs, or lack thereof, must be viewed in this light.

The administration of the infant centers is more complex than in smaller communes of the north where there are more centers (fewer centers, more

administration). There was the opportunity to interview three persons in the local government who were involved in the administration of the program which provides for infant care.

These were administrators in the office of public education, social welfare and condition of women. After these interviews I was left with the distinct impression that infant care as it exists in Palermo is a political football and each bureaucrat wants to get his/her hand in the pot. The funds for this program come from the central government and are distributed to the region which in turn doles it out to the provincia and in form it should eventually be allotted to the separate quartiere to administer. This complex system is further complicated by the fact that in Sicily the infant care centers are under the jurisdiction of the office of sanitation and health while the office of public instruction is responsible for personnel matters.

In Palermo a worker who had worked in the ONMI and continued in the new XONMI reported that now that the administration has been changed, the personnel is treated better than when they were run by the central administration in Rome. The new administration allows them more fringe benefits; however, the money for the Nido comes in more slowly and the paper work has tripled. It was her opinion that the ONMI administration ran more smoothly. The entire purpose of closing the central ONMI administration seems, at least in the South, to have temporarily been defeated. The basic tenet of the Nido, that the authority should be under local and supposedly democratic control by the people it served, would better reflect local needs. This has not been translated into reality. In Sicily there are no local taxes, all money goes to and is returned from Rome. "Our (Sicilian) government 'specializes' in not spending but in investing and inflation takes its toll. So as you see, we are not only treated badly but we treat ourselves badly. The victim is as guilty." (Note 4)

Meanwhile an office concerned with the condition of women interprets the mandate in such a way that it has the responsibility of developing and running the infant care program under the new law which provides for the Asili Nido (Bonnano, et al, Note 10). I was informed by Dr. Agnello (Note 11) in the Office of Social Welfare that it is their opinion that the aged are in greater need of service than are the babies. It was her opinion that there were sufficient services for the babies and that the ONMI structures would provide a perfect structure to meet the needs of the growing aged population. I would admit these buildings are better constructed for the use of adults but without new buildings for the nido (which have been in process for sometime) there is no other place for the babies. The attitude toward infant care is a far cry from the attitude in Reggio; then too, they are miles apart geographically and politically.

Palermo is certainly representative of the Christian Catholic subculture. Further, it is representative of the Southern Italians' relationship with the government. Government of any sort is not to be trusted. In an interview with two recent university graduates whose charge was to work on the transition from the XONMI to the nido, it was reported that the office which was to administer the nido and handle the funds from the region to the provincia to the city had been established since 1976, but in stark contrast to northern cities, no nido has as yet been built. At that time (July, 1980) plans for the construction of nine new buildings were begun. Of these, seven are still in construction and two cannot be completed because of poor site selection. One difficulty encountered that was specifically mentioned is that the local government would invest the money while doing "research into construction plans." By the time the decision has been made about the construction plan and construction site, inflation has taken its toll and the building is once again postponed (Note 10).

Nongovernment Sponsored Infant Care

There are many diverse programs throughout Italy that are not sponsored by the central government. Industry in the north is a major sponsor for infant and child care and in the south the Catholic Church is one such source. The majority of these provide help for the working family but a few also give shelter and training to the unwed mother as well.

Industry supported care Fiat, Italy's largest automobile manufacturer opened its first child care service in 1948. Then, as today, this service is available only if the mother works for Fiat and the service is without cost to the family. Currently, Fiat has six centers in factories and several others proximate to Fiat factories. These child care facilities are all referred to as Nido Fiat.

The nido in which the interview took place was originally built by the Catholic Church as an orphanage. Fiat took it over in 1971 for use as child care. The building, which reflects standard ONMI architecture is three stories with babies on the third floor, laundry and kitchen in the basement and the older children and office on the ground floor. It houses 297 children from 6 months to 7 years (6-12 months, 13; 12-36 months, 86; and 3-7 years, 198). The nido is open from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m., thus allowing parents extra time to shop and do housework. All the personnel are hired and paid by Fiat; Fiat receives no government subsidy for child care. The personnel are allowed 20 hours per year for professional growth. Fiat has five psychologists and one pediatric consultant per nido to work with the children and their families.

The personnel all have the appropriate education but the gentlemen in charge of all Fiat child care (which includes 1,450 children), received his degree in restaurant management and came from Fiat personnel management to take

charge of child care. The coordinator of this nido expressed that the signor had a lot to learn about children but that he was willing and eager. The reasoning behind his placement was that since child care is responsible for feeding this number of children three times a day, his skills in restaurant management should well suit him for the task (Interview Director Nidi Fiat, Note 12).

Olivetti, a business machine company located in Turin was the originator of infant programs other than child care. This program is of more recent origin than Fiat. Olivetti's espoused purpose was to promote better human relations and in this effort they proposed not just care, but caring. In order to develop this system, Olivetti invested in planning meetings with internationally-known consultants. Much of their work has been incorporated by the nido as it developed in the regions of Piedmont and Emilia Romagna.

One of the finest infant care programs in Italy is supported by Banque d'Italia in Rome. This is housed in a vast apartment located in a reconstructed Roman palace off a major street, the Via Nazionale. The rooms are small and intimate and there is a continuity of space. The babies are at the end of a hall in a cul-de-sac. The floor is carpeted and the colors are muted shades of yellow, orange and green. The room for babies is a floor room. All the furniture, tables, toys, pillows, mirrors and shelves can be reached by crawling babies. The space is used imaginatively and the babies have many nooks and crannies. On one side is the room where the infants sleep in wicker baskets on the floor. These baskets are placed on the floor so when the baby wakes there is no fear he will inadvertently fall out of bed. For the wicker basket there is a frame with four legs on wheels. If the baby is cranky or restless, his basket is placed in this frame and he is gently rocked until he falls asleep.

There are 42 infants in the nido, 15 are between the ages of 7-15 months. These babies are allowed to sleep and eat on demand with the exception, that if the baby does indicate he is ready to be fed he must consume the prescribed amount. The room is self contained with its own small kitchen and each meal is prepared fresh in the kitchen.

The older children are provided a modified Montessori nursery program and for the workers with the younger children the emotional and psychological aspects of the infants growth are stressed. After the caregivers receive the diploma of Assistente per l'Infanzia, the bank provides special training for work in this nido. As was the case for Fiat this nido is a service provided for their workers and there is no charge for the service.

Industrial supported child care is not thriving throughout most of the industrial parts of the country. The following is a translation of a reply from a young Italian in charge of the nido and scuola materna of the Ducati Elettrotecnica (an electronics industry) in Bologna. These facilities are open only to children of the female personnel. The company employs about 1,700 people of which 80 percent are women. These schools were created to give these women a facility for their children inside the factory. Until 1976 there were 150 children enrolled, now there are only 60. The reasons for the decline are numerous: 1) no new personnel have been hired for about three years; 2) many workers have been placed on a temporary layoff; 3) there has been a sharp decline in the birth rate and finally, 4) the company has developed a policy, in agreement with the city, to eliminate this facility. (According to this reporter these closures are politically motivated.) This is the only company-sponsored infant care in Emilia Romagna. This facility serves infants from three months to four years and it is open from 7:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. There is a 20-person staff (cooks, cleaners, teachers, etc.) to care for these

60 babies. It is expected to close soon and she is looking for a job elsewhere in the company (Note 13).

Private care Another type of care for mothers and child which is provided through a private source is the Villaggio della Madre e del Fanciullo (Village of the mother and child). This is a voluntary organization started in 1945 in Milan by Elda Scarzella who is still chairman and director of this school. Her work as a social worker convinced her that the troubles of the adolescent were caused by the separation of the child and mother during infancy. Her approach to the amelioration of this problem was to establish a school for unwed mothers and their infants. The girl enters the school when she is pregnant and remains until the child is a year or later if suitable arrangements have not been made for the mother and child. This school has its own nido where the mothers place their infants while they learn a trade, go to school or look for work. This school is subcontracted from the city, but these funds are not sufficient for the extensive care given these mothers and their babies and it is largely sustained by private donations.

The school covers several well-landscaped acres. There is the main house for meetings, office, etc. and several cottages where the girls live with their infants. A large part of their food is grown in their own garden. There is an extensive sewing and weaving shop and their work is shown and sold throughout the country and, until recently, they had their own delivery suite so that the mother and infant were together from the moment of birth. This complex of buildings has expanded since the original school developed in 1945 and was designed by Ms. Scarzella's son, a well known architect in Milan. The school is well known throughout Italy and has been the source for training puericultrici, social workers, obstetricians, pediatricians, and psychiatrists.

South of Rome many child care facilities are operated by the Catholic Church and there are private for-profit care centers. Data on private facilities is difficult to obtain. One private nido in Naples, Nido Sorriso, is located in the residential district and is housed in two apartments. The older children occupy one apartment and the babies another. This nido receives funds from the province and is regulated by them. There are nine infants under 18 months. These babies bring their own lunch from home and the nido provides the pasta.

The private nidi in Palermo is similar to the nido in Naples. They are located in apartment houses which have been organized to meet the demands of young children. In Palermo, as in Naples, these are located in middle class neighborhoods and outdoor playspace is extremely limited. These nido are small and have spaces for 45 children under three. The fee is 70,000 lire per month ($75) with one meal included. The director of one private nido was extremely guarded and would not let us past the reception room even after she was shown many official credentials from the Italian government. The others were open and friendly. These private nidi are inordinately cramped on space and the babies have very few toys.

Training and Staffing

There are both public and private schools which train the infant care worker. These young girls have the equivalence of an eighth grade education when they specialize in infant caring. Foundling homes and orphanages have typically served as the training ground for these girls. These courses last for a period of one year to three years depending on the diploma which is granted. Currently these diplomas are under the jurisdiction of the separate regions. Via Gaeta is the regional training school for Lazio and these girls

receive a diploma in puericultura (this is a Nido/Orphanage south of Rome). This training facility is under the auspices of Dr. Corbo, a pediatrician and leading authority on infant education. This school serves as a primary source for the training of puericultrici in this region. It is supported by the region of Lazio and several Catholic nuns serve as full-time instructors.

The building, which is relatively new, looks like the typical three story ONMI. The first floor is used for offices and classrooms and the babies are kept upstairs. There is a resplendent garden with lovely equipment for the babies but the outside is not easily accessible from the inside. In order to enjoy the garden the babies must be taken downstairs, outside, around to the back and through a locked gate.

The girls who come for training in Gaeta are mostly from Sardinia, Sicily and Calabria; generally they have finished middle school. The selection is competitive and a specific number from each region is selected. The course is 11 months and they live on the third floor of the nido while they are in training. Schooling, room and board are free with a small stipend.

The philosophy behind this child care is reflected in the following sign which is in the entry hall.

> From the first hour of life it is necessary for the child to be offered adequate education. This is the realization of warm human relationship. It has the value of emotional compensation accelerating the sense of security and stimulates the normal process of maturation.

The training these girls receive is formal and didactic. They are instructed in physiology, anatomy, nutrition and health procedures. The educational techniques, which are emphasized in the school, were articulated in the lecture delivered by Dr. Corbo (Note 14) and in the observation of the children at work.

We were greeted by the babies and each visitor was given a flower by the baby. After we were settled in the classroom a demonstration was given with the two and three-year-olds sitting quietly waiting to perform. When the time came they demonstrated that at two they had learned to read simple words like mouth, head, etc.; they also knew their colors and their numbers.

Dr. Corbo emphasized (my translation)

> There is no problem teaching a two-year-old to read. The problem is to help them. I do not see the need to wait until the child is six years. This way the child begins to realize competence and capacity for attention and concentration.

The statement is seen throughout the school. The twos and threes are sat at small desks with one teacher and instructed.

Dr. Corbo's philosophy is obviously early is better than later. He does not feel that parents have the time nor necessary education to aid the infant. The trainee is taught to observe the infants and to keep a minute detail of development. The stimulus is thus calibrated to suit the child's level. As he says "developmental levels are adhered to" . . . [<u>with a push</u>]. (emphasis mine) Dr. Corbo cites as his sources Gesell, Wallon, Freud, with particular emphasis on Piaget, but one is not impressed with the display of Piagetian principles in this environment. He emphasizes the need for order, scheduling and teaching. Language development is developed with the help of the educator who instructs a baby before a mirror to blow feathers and thus develop coordination of the respiratory tract. He stresses the plasticity of the central nervous system during this period and concludes

> The possibility that children can learn at this age is now an accepted fact. The clinical medical model has taught us that this can be done. What will the central nervous system suffer if we do not begin instruction before three?

Dr. Corbo employs the use of the medical model despite the fact that these are normal infants housed in the nido as orphans or family neglect.

Dr. Corbo has published several books on the education of the infant. His views represent the regimentation of the ONMI training but his emphasis on early learning is a departure from the ONMI training.

Via Gaeta is one of the few remaining government-sponsored training for puericultrici which provides the opportunity for 24-hour experience.

The plethora of titles which abound for the workers who care for young children is overwhelming. The following is a list of the different titles which reflect different training of personnel found to be working in the Nido: vigilatrice d'infanzia, (watcher of the infants) licenza di puericultrice, (licensed childcare) assistente Montessori (Montessori diploma) maestra di scuola materna (nursery teacher) maestra d'asilo (infant teacher) assistente sanitaria vigilatrice (sanitary worker) assistente sociale (social worker) assistente al'infanzia (infant worker) educatrice di scuola materna (nursery educator) assistente sanitaria visitatrice (health home visitor). Some of the titles for the auxiliary help are included as well: dietista (dietician) infermiera pediatrica (pediatric LVN) etc.* Many of these titles are held over from the national law #1098 passed in 1940. This law stipulated that in the ONMI the personnel should each have specific training for their specific duties. The director had a different diploma than did the caregivers and the cleaners had to be trained in special methods of cleaning the ONMI and were given special examinations. Still in Palermo and Naples it was with great pride that the workers each have to take different tests for their position and that the cleaning help is specialized in sanitary methods for the nido.

* These titles are rough translations. We do not, in this country, have the level of specialization at this education level (paraprofessionals).

The old school Istituto Technico Feminile trained ONMI personnel. The trainees were eligible for work in the hospital as well. In general the workers responsible for the care of infants up to age three receive three separate diplomas, Puericultrici a one-year program, Assistente prima infanzia a two-year program, vigilatrice Infanzia, and in order to teach three and four-year-olds, a four-year degree past elementary school.

Concomitant with the transition from ONMI to Nido, new training procedures are being instituted. The Istituto di Psicologia CNR, a government supported research agency, has been involved in innovative training programs. The first attempt at education for Nido personnel is to alter the education from rules and regulations about sanitation, health and obedience to an understanding of the growth and development of the infant and the nature of his emotional development as well. In 1977 a trade union engaged CNR to study selected centers for six months. These centers used videotape and concentrated specifically on the babies social play. The video tapes were later used for training. One attempt was made to measure the effectiveness of the training and one group of caregivers was given special social educational training and another had the normal procedure. Observers noted that after two months the experimental group set up play corner and toys, left toys available for the babies, the babies played more quietly and there was more spontaneous play (Musatti, Note 16). In Modena caregivers use videotapes as a training device.

The personnel at CNR now offer in-service training for the regions who request such services. In Pistoria, intensive training has continued at the request of the Nido personnel. The objective was to facilitate Nido personnel in self-training techniques. They covered attachment, autonomy and communication. All personnel attended on a voluntary basis. These meetings consisted of three meetings, two days each. Now the Pistoria personnel handle

their own training and CNR provides guidance when requested. These training sessions have been given in Venice and Milan but with limited success (Musatti, Note 15).

In Emilia Romagna the nido personnel are not hired on the basis of diploma. In their opinion training on the job with the philosophy of the Nido is far better than attempting to retrain. The nido personnel are concerned with attachment and spend much time easing separation problems, working these through with the parents and providing stable figures in the Nido for the young baby.

Naples on the other hand uses the personnel which have been trained in the traditional fashion of the ONMI. When the Nido administration hired new personnel to work in the ONMI, they too addressed the problem of attachment. It was their observation that the personnel who worked with the infants often became competitive with parents for the affection of the babies. Thus the city contracted a psychoanalyst to work in groups with Nido personnel. This contract was not continued after the first year.

CURRENT ISSUES

Any social program which impinges on the family will be wrought with controversy; the merits of infant care are no exception. Constant debate occurs on matters of curriculum and training purpose of the Nido as well as minimum standards for the management of the Nido. Finances are no small issue and even the long term consequences of infant care have been questioned.

Curriculum and Training of Personnel

In the regions of Lazio, Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, and Piedmont a vast amount of energy, time, discussion and money is directed toward the development of appropriate curriculum for these babies as well as training programs for the

Nido personnel. Numerous manuals have been written and these rely heavily on the research data from the U.S. and Great Britain. Theories of Freud and Piaget are rather loosely interpreted and incorporated as well.

One of the most frequently cited authorities is Elinor Goldschmied, an English woman with many years of experience in Italy. She is known for her documentary film on the development of the normal infant. Her books are used for caregivers and parents alike. One book, Il Bambino nell'Asilo Nido: guida per le educatrici edi genitori, is devoted solely to the infant, family and the Nido (Goldschmeid, 1979). This book consists of ten chapters. The titles range from the typical growth and development during infancy and the second year of life with special emphasis on the baby and the environment of the Nido. Further topics of interest are devoted to the adult in the Nido, the environment of the Nido, i.e., characteristics of the neighborhood, and the structure of the Nido. One entire chapter is devoted to the importance of the hour of the meal. The book also includes material on appropriate toys and simple diagrams that can be used by parents as well as caregivers to make suitable toys. The infant's autonomy is stressed and the educator is seen to serve as a facilitator who helps the baby find himself. The important notion of the baby's "two worlds," the Nido and his home, is discussed at length. The book is a thoughtful and comprehensive coverage of important aspects of infancy and infant care. Perhaps in reaction to the stress placed by ONMI administration on health and sanitation, the area of health and safety is limited.

A recent collection of readings, Asili Nido Oggi, (Dinelli, Dore & Pensato, 1979) is devoted to similar concepts and additional topics which are discussed including the entry of the baby and his family into the nido, sleeping in the nido, sexuality of the baby, aggression, as well as masculine

and feminine roles and the typical discussion of the diet and feeding of the infant. The material on sex roles suggests that this is a topic fraught with contention and affects the child in the nido and his family. The authors suggest that there is little research on the topic. Several observations of infants at play in the nido are cited. They note that the boys will play with dolls and that girls will play with cars. However, in general, they have observed that the boys are more aggressive and willful and possessive of their toys, while the girls will give up easily; boys use actions and girls use words (pages 215 & 217). The final chapter of this book includes a proposal for the organization concerning the importance of the training and inservice work for the nido personnel. This stresses the need for weekly meetings, coordination between the teachers, psychologist and family and coordination with necessary medical expertise. The minimum program should include the infants' psychological, psychomotor and physiological development from conception to three years. An extensive bibliography is included which covers the Italian work on the Nido as well as theoretical material. Works by Bettelheim, Bruner, Danziger, Kagan, Piaget, Spitz and Millar have all been translated into Italian and were included. Material on infant care outside the home includes Children of the Dream (Kibbutz), Russia and Scandinavia. This book is of a more philosophical slant than Goldschmieds' down-to-earth treatise.

The consensus in the North is that the personnel and curriculum in the nido is vital; the nido experience should be provided all babies as the cornerstone of his socialization in the larger society and illuminating for his family as well. (Henri, Note 16.)

The Nido in the South is still largely housed in the ONMI buildings and the majority of the personnel are holdovers from the ONMI. In the XONMI a

major issue is apparently with the administration of the nido per se and not so much with the curriculum for the infants, families and nido personnel.

Administrative issues.

The law which provided for the construction and administration of the Asili Nido stipulated a ratio of caregiver to infant be established and provides monies for a minimum number of employees; that is, the number of adults employed but not working. There is, however, a major difficulty with this legislation since it does not provide funds for substitute personnel in the advent of illness. Therefore, during the year's observation (1979-1980) it was infrequent to find the required complement of personnel present. The irony of this situation is that with the liberal pregnancy and maternity benefits provided by national law many caregivers are employed but not working due to pregnancy or maternity. Thus, particularly where younger women have replaced many of the old time employees, absenteeism is high and many nido have a shortage of help. Lazio is currently hoping to pass a provision that would allow for funds to be used to pay for substitute help.

Despite the fact that the original law was passed in 1971 the Asili Nido has not settled many issues which were of no concern under the ONMI administration. The intent of the Nido legislation was to support local control in contrast to the original law which provided for the ONMI. This older administration dictated everything from the daily menu and training for the puericultrici to the uniforms worn by the caregivers and babies.

Many of these recent issues generated sufficient concern to instigate several meetings of nido administration, nido personnel and other professionals involved in child care. During 1979-1980 two meetings were held in Emilia Romagna, one in Bologna in October 1979 and in Reggio nell'Emilia in May 1980.

The meeting in Bologna in October 1979 was titled "The Educational and Social Value of the Asilo Nido: Reflection, Experience and Proposals." At

this meeting working groups presented papers on Organization and Function of Social Services, Building Structure, Materials, Furnishing, Toys in the Asilio Nido, Hygiene and Sanitation in the Asilo Nido, The Professional Role of the Nido Worker, Formation of Permanent Inservice Training, Psychological and Educational Subjects for the Asilo Nido. This conference was attended by nido personnel, university professors, pediatricians, parents, neurologists, psychiatrists, social workers and architects.

Over 19 topics were on the agenda in Reggio nell' Emilia and these ranged from the inclusion of the handicapped infant in the Nido to the costs of the services and the rates charged to families. The agenda reiterated that the institution of the Nido was to serve an educational function not only as support or social service for the family. Thus, this meeting was to establish minimum guarantees for the family, the baby and the personnel for the Nido throughout Italy. Three major issues were underlined; the training and in-service for all participants, provisions for additional help during the absence of regular personnel and the coordination with other community services. Groups were established to report on the establishment of basic standards for the Nido and research on the child in the Nido.

Finances

The national law stipulates that each region shall receive a sum for management of the AN as well as for the construction of new buildings to house the infants. The administration of these monies is left up to the regions who develop further guidelines and in turn, give the money to the province. The use of this money varies widely. Lombard and Emilia Romagna have, as of September 1979, the largest number of constructed nido, yet only 4 percent of children under three are enrolled in the AN in Lombard as compared to

10 percent in Emilia Romagna. The regions of the north account for 64% of the population, only 54 prcent of live births and 85 percent of the nidi constructed in all of Italy (Istituto Centrale di Statistica, 1980). This despite equal distribution of funds based on number of children under three in the region.

The cost per child varies from region to region and within region. The least spent is 1,500,000 lira per year (Puglia, Liguria and Valle d'Aosta) to 2,000,000 lire in Sicily, Marche, Veneto and Piedmont. The highest per capita cost is in Reggio nell' Emilia of 2,800,000 lire per child, and is offset by an additional tax passed by the province.* The majority of the regions charge the family according to a sliding scale which depends on the families' income as well as the number of children in the family. In Lazio the region in which Rome is located, Marche and Sicily, the AN is free (Note 18).

The rate of inflation in Italy in 1979-1980 hovered around 18 percent. This of course means that the purchasing power of the lira is decreasing rapidly. Monies from the government for the Nido have continued to decline, thus there is an ever increasing need to either look for alternative funding sources or decrease the costs. Piedmont has decreased the cost per child by enlarging the size of the nido, and houses more infants in each building. In many instances they have combined the nido with the scuola materna, thus decreasing costs.

The national government (1979-1980) stipulates that the woman shall receive six months full pay which she may take during pregnancy and/or after delivery. Should she choose to remain home during the first year she is paid

* Approximately $1,700, $2,220, and $3,100 US dollars respectively.

one-half salary for the last six months. The mother also receives full pay if she must remain at home to care for a sick child (Tedesco, 1976). These laws which provide support for the working mother are costly and in the current economic stress, many social institutions are being scrutinized more closely, particularly infant care.

SUMMARY

Despite the many differences between Italians there is one common value; this thread which binds the Italian to his house, the casa and his family. Children are worshipped. This is true in defiance of region or social class; from peasant to wealthy industrialist, from the Austrian Italian of Bolzano to the Sicilian of Syracuse, the Italian's first loyalty is to his casa and his famiglia.

In Italy, as in this country, the 1960s was a period of social upheaval. There were student riots in the universities, the women's organizations began to foment cohesive demands for equal pay and child care. These causes were heavily supported and sustained by the PCI (the Communist Party). Two important pieces of legislation, the Family Law, 1975 and the Asilo Nido, 1971, impinge on the Italian family. And more recently the Italian family insofar as the traditional sex role is under attack. (Tedesco, 1976) It is still uncommon for the male to be intimately involved in child care. In Lazio, however, pending legislation provides that the father may receive sick pay should he remain at home with a sick child.

The Asilo Nido legislation was a clear indication that the infant care which was provided by the ONMI was not satisfactory for large numbers of Italians. The ONMI which was built on the sanitary-medical model provided little other than custodial care and the Italian women who were disenfranchised until 1945 demanded more than that for their offspring. Unfortunately the

passage of laws does not insure adequate consistent programming for infants. and there still exist vast differences in infant care. Many of these discrepancies are a function of a difference in philosophy and culture as well as resistance to change. The transition from ONMI to Asili Nido is established in the Northern regions. Currently these areas now deal with specifics of the delivery of care. To the outsider it appears that the Southern regions cling to the ONMI structure and eschew the construction of the Nido. Further, the Southern regions appear either by exclusion or choice to be noticeably absent from the national meetings which are devoted to the many unsettled issues which concern the Nido.

As one would suspect in a country as diverse as Italy, the institution of the Asili Nido has its critics and others whose apparent response is ambivalent. In February the Italian Association on Child Abuse was addressed by C. A. Moro, a leading judge in Italy. He opened the conference with the suggestion that among many abuses for the young child perhaps the Nido, which separated mother from child, was an abusive institution. However, he concluded the conference with the statement to the effect that it may prove to be more abusive to infants for their parents and the mother not to have a choice in child care (Moro, Note 17).

Saltz (1976) summarized her view of the Italian infant care

> . . . a review of this recent Italian progress in both quality and quantity of childcare services is very encouraging. It can serve as an example for what we might accomplish if we, as child development professionals, emulated our Italian colleagues in giving the same kind of serious purpose, determined effort and sense of commitment to secure the rights of young children to the kind of quality childcare which can further all aspects of their development (p. 10).

Now some years later we can see a system which is still fraught with inconsistencies and controversy. Consequently we do not suggest that we emulate our Italian colleagues but rather learn from their experience.

The Italians distrust empiricism. For them philosophy is the noblest discipline, the ultimate doctrine. Philosophy provides the data for matters of prime importance, no matter how imperfectly assimilated; it determines how a man votes and lives and those with whom he consorts (Jucker, 1970).

Our current research has focused on the microscopic workings of infant care. We have focused on attachment (Blehar, 1974; Blanchard & Main, 1979), peer behavior (Finkelstein, et al., 1978), caregiver behaviors (Cummings, 1980) but we have not, as Belsky and Steinberg (1978) suggest, looked at the interface between ecosystems. Not that these are not important issues, but they are not the only issues. When one considers how embroiled infant care is in the larger political machinations of a small, albeit complex country, what are the implications for us in terms of policy and implementation. Who should be responsible for what? What are the outcomes of government as opposed to private or industry sponsored care? Do we in fact understand how infant care affects the family and the work place? Italians with long experience with several types of infant care agonize over these broader philosophical issues which we might well consider as we realize that more families must either by choice or need find other than home care for their young children.

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